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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 001468

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TAGS: [RW](#) [CG](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#)

SUBJECT: UNHCR REPATRIATES 283 AS PART OF ONGOING  
REPATRIATION EFFORT

Classified By: Poloff Meghan Moore for Reasons 1.5 B and D

11. (U) Summary: UNHCR repatriated July 26-27 a total of what UNHCR believed to be 283 Rwandan refugees from S. Kivu to Rwanda as part of an ongoing repatriation effort. Once they crossed the border, however, many "refugees" said they were really Congolese who wished to stay in the Congo. While these individuals might indeed be savvy Congolese using the international assistance network to their advantage, they also could be pawns in a game designed to embarrass both the Congolese government and the UN. End Summary.

12. (C) On July 27, UNHCR Acting Country Representative told poloff that July 26-27, UNHCR repatriated a total of what it believed to be 283 Rwandan refugees (50 men, 63 women and 170 children) from S. Kivu to Rwanda as part of an ongoing repatriation effort. (Note: From Jan 1-May 30, UNHCR repatriated 2544 Rwandans from South Kivu to Rwanda. Due to insecurity in Bukavu during June, only 19 were repatriated. End note.)

13. (C) The UNHCR rep. said the refugees contacted a local NGO in Bunyakiri on July 23 and told the staff they were Rwandan refugees who wished to return to Rwanda. On July 24-25, they were transported from Bunyakiri to Bukavu for standard UNHCR refugee screening and processing. On July 25, the group told UNHCR Bukavu Protection Officer that everyone in the group was born in the DRC, children of Rwandan immigrants from the 1930s-1950s. They identified themselves as Rwandan nationals, and said they wished to return to Rwanda. On July 26, UNHCR Bukavu Protection Officer interviewed the men and women separately. The men said that the main reason they left their homes outside Bunyakiri was due to clashes on or about July 16 between the 10th Military Region and Nkunda's troops. They said that 10th Military Region troops forced them to leave the area and they were forced to go to the UNHCR repatriation center at Bunyakiri. The men reported two cases of female rape, but the women reported no rapes. Neither group said that they had been mistreated by Mabe's soldiers, held in a detention facility, or tortured. At the Bukavu transit center, each family was interviewed separately and completed voluntary repatriation forms. Once they crossed the border, however, the Acting Country Rep said they changed their story, said they had lied to UNHCR about being Rwandan, were really Congolese, and wished to stay in the Congo. In response, the S. Kivu governor initially agreed to let them to return to the DRC. He then said that they should stay in Rwanda while their true status was determined. On July 30, the Rwandan government granted asylum to this group and moved them to a refugee camp.

14. (C) On July 27, Acting UNHCR Country Representative told poloff he was surprised and disappointed by the extensive negative attention this case had received. In his opinion, UNHCR staff responded according to their standard procedures, did what they thought was appropriate, and were blindsided when the group crossed the border and declared they were expelled Congolese citizens. On July 30, two MONUC civilian officers separately told poloff that the whole story was really 'fishy.' MONUC poloff said that this may be related to the larger issue of attempting to portray the current Kivus conflict as an ethnic one. She said hardline Banyamulenge leader Benoit Kadage and the GOR have been working together to prevent moderate Banyamulenge refugees from meeting with GDRC officials. For example, on July 30, the Minister of Social Affairs and S. Kivu Vice Governor (himself a Banyamulenge) met with Banyamulenge refugees in Burundi while waiting to receive clearance from the GOR to meet with Banyamulenge refugees in Cyangugu. As of August 3, MONUC Bukavu reported that clearance had not been given, and the Minister had not been able to meet with the refugees. In addition, 12 moderate Banyamulenge leaders who were invited by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) to participate in a reconciliation ceremony in Bukavu were unable to participate because they had been intimidated and kept in Cyangugu by Kadage. (Comment: This is not the first time that Kadage has been accused of preventing refugees from returning or meeting with Congolese officials. He has also been accused of helping Nkunda recruit soldiers, including child soldiers, from refugee camps in Rwanda. End comment.)

Comment

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15. (C) Clearly, UNHCR had no intention of forcibly expelling

Congolese citizens. There also are suspicious elements to this story, such as why this particular group assembled in Bunyakiri (where other IDPs were not), told at least two organizations they were Rwandan, and only changed their story when they crossed the border. Maybe they were scared and did what they could to move from what they perceived as a dangerous location, or maybe they are pawns in a game designed to embarrass both the Congolese government and the UN. This case clearly illustrates some of the complexities surrounding the nationalities issue in the Congo, including how individuals within groups identify themselves (i.e., Rwandan vice Congolese), and how outsiders, such as UNHCR and local Congolese authorities, define groups.

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